

JEWISH-AMERICAN EXPERIENCE

Overview

- ⊕ Describe the Historical Perspective
- ⊕ Describe the Jewish Identity
- ⊕ Describe the concepts of Judaism
- ⊕ Describe the Jewish Culture
- ⊕ Explain Anti-Semitism
- ⊕ Explain the Current Relationships
- ⊕ Define the Contemporary Issues

Jewish-American Experience

✡ Historical Perspective

- We look at the history and events of the Jews in America, not to take away from the experience of the other groups but to add an understanding.

✡ Concept of Judaism

- One of the oldest religions in the world
- Forerunner of both Christianity and Islam
- Arose in Near East some 3,500 years ago

Jewish-American Experience

◊ Early Jewish History

- “ In the beginning, God created the universe.” (Gen,1:1) the start of Jewish history
- The Old Testament is the story of the Jewish people
- The first five chapters are the foundation of the faith called the Torah, Talmud is the interpretation of the Torah

◊ Immigration

- Primary reason for immigrating was for religious freedom
- 1654-1829, 23 people, 5,000 by 1829, 1820-1880 300,000, 1880-1924 approx.. 2.5 million

Legislation

- ❖ Immigration Act of 1924
- ❖ Separation of church and state
 - Ongoing battle from the early 1800s to 1947
 - Thomas Jefferson persuaded Virginia to separate church and state, many states followed
- ❖ 1845 Federal Government ruled the 1st Amendment did not apply to states only Federal Government
- ❖ Ruling was overturned in 1947 by Supreme Court

State of Israel

✡ Zionist Movement

- Originally aimed at re-establishment of a Jewish National homeland and state in Palestine
- Now concerned with development and support of Israel

- ✡ In 1917 the British supported the Balfour Declaration
- ✡ In 1947 the United Nations voted to partition Palestine again as a Jewish state.

Impact of a Separate State

- ❖ Ended a debate amongst the Jewish-American whether to support the state of Israel or not
- ❖ Jewish-Americans stayed in America, but supported Israel with money and skills
- ❖ Philanthropic (affection), financial support and, skills

Legislation Impacted Jewish and Non-Jewish Americans

- 1948 Truman Commission recommended removal of all questions pertaining to religion, color, national or racial origin within government supported schools
- 1949 American Counsel on Higher Learning recommended the elimination of religious preference
- 1978 Supreme Court overturned the quota system as unlawful based on the Allen Baake vs UC Davis Medical Center. This caused a rift between Jewish Civil Rights and Black Civil Rights organizations

Judaism

- ❖ The Traditional definition of a Jew is if you were born of a Jewish mother
- ❖ In 1983 the Reform Jews recognized it can be passed from either parent as long as the child is raised in the Jewish tradition.
- ❖ You can convert but it must be approved by an Orthodox Rabbi

Jewish Identity

◊ Orthodox

- Known as the traditional Jewish religion, strictly and literally interpret the teaching of the Torah and the laws or Talmud

◊ Reform Judaism

- Modern, teaches that Jewish religion is an evolving religion and it must change to meet the needs of our time

◊ Conservative Judaism

- Middle of the road , based on the congregation, Conservatism favors tradition but will adjust ritual laws.

Extreme Jewish Movements

Hasidic (or folk) and mystic followers, Black Hebrew and Falashism consider themselves true descendants of original Jewish Tribes, the re-constructionists, who reject the traditional concepts about God and the Torah, Evangelical Jews and even Jews who believe Jesus is the Messiah

Judaism Values and Ethics

- ✡ Inherent dignity and importance of all humankind
- ✡ Equality of all people
- ✡ The capacity of all to improve given the will and tools
- ✡ Sharing of wealth with less fortunate
- ✡ Special concern which God has mandated for the poor, the widow, the hungry, and the orphan

Judaism Values and Ethics

- ◊ A society or state is created to serve the citizens
- ◊ 7 Noachide Laws essential to any civilized society
 - Bans murder, robbery, blasphemy, idolatry, eating living flesh, sexual crimes, and requires every community to establish courts of justice.
- ◊ The rule of law (Talmud) - Freedom of choice and accompanying responsibility for own actions
- ◊ Obligation of individuals and societies to pursue justice, righteousness and the ways of peace

Jewish Culture Seven Areas

- ✡ The Torah
- ✡ The Talmud (Law)
- ✡ Mitzvah - To affirm commitment to God through good deeds, Bar male, Bat female
- ✡ One God
- ✡ Covenant - Contract between God and Jewish people
- ✡ Dietary laws (Kashrut)

Celebrations and Holidays

- ✡ Sabbath - Day of holiness
- ✡ Rosh Hashanah - Jewish New Year ten day period of penitence and spiritual renewal
- ✡ Yom Kippur - Day of Atonement most holy day marked by fasting and prayer
- ✡ Sukkot - Commemorates the 40-year wandering of Israelites in the desert on the way to the Promised Land

Celebrations and Holidays

- ✡ Simchat Torah - Concludes the Sukkot festival
- ✡ Chanukah (Hon-i-ka) Festival of Lights
- ✡ Purim (Poo-rim) Feast of Lots
- ✡ Pesach (Peh-sach) Passover
- ✡ Shavuot (Week of Weeks) Festival of Weeks

Jewish Families

Nuclear families. Most believe in lineage through the mother. Males are religious, obligated and the provider. Females raise children. Different roles are reflected by type:

Orthodox	Conservative	Reform
Separate Worship	Congregational Choice	Full Participation, Family Seating
Minyan-Male (Quorum or 10 males)	Minyan-Choice Congressional	Minyan Men and Women (any number)
Bris (Circumcision)	Bris/Naming Ceremony	Naming Ceremony
Bar Mitzvah	Bat Mitzvah	Bat Mitzvah
Lineage (Religious Tradition)	Lineage Contemporary	Contemporary Definition
Rabbis-Men	Women Rabbis since 1983	Women Rabbis since 1972

ANTI-SEMITISM

- ❖ Discrimination or prejudice against Jews
- ❖ Jews feared others and relied on themselves for mutual aid, help associations include:
 - B'nai B'rith (1843) established to care for the poor and orphans
 - Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (1881) helped the new immigrants
 - American Jewish Committee (1906) supports: “Rights for Jews is best secured by rights for all”
 - Anti-defamation League of B'nai B'rith highlights incidents of Anti-Semitism

Contemporary Issues

- ◊ Social/Political - Continue to fight anti-Semitism, the fate of Israel and U.S. policy towards Israel
- ◊ Cultural - Low population growth, assimilation into other cultures, and inter-marriage, while is not prohibited, it is a concern
- ◊ Military Service - Very few Jewish on active duty, attributed to:
 - Few Jewish Chaplains, Dietary constraints, Sabbath, Yarmulke, overseas assignments (Germany), traditions of family and home rituals.

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Holocaust Exercise